

Kaytetye language

Kaytetye (also spelt **Kaititj**, **Gaididj**, **Kaiditj**, **Kaytej**) is an Australian Aboriginal language spoken in the Northern Territory north of Alice Springs^[1] by the Kaytetye people, who live around Barrow Creek and Tennant Creek. It belongs to the Arandic subgroup of the Pama-Nyungan languages and is related to Alyawarra, which is one of the Upper Arrernte dialects. It has an unusual phonology and there are no known dialects.^[1]

The language is considered to be threatened; it is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users,^[5] with only 120 speakers of the language in the 2016 census.^[1]

The Kaytetye have (or had) a well-developed sign language known as Akitiri or Elyte eltyarrenke.^[6]

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Phonology

Kaytetye is phonologically unusual in a number of ways. Words start with vowels and end with schwa; full CV(C) syllables only occur within a word, as in the word *arrkwentyarte* 'three' (schwa is spelled ⟨e⟩, unless initial, in which case it is not written and often not pronounced). Stress falls on the first full syllable. There are only two productive vowels, but numerous consonants, including pre-stopped and pre-palatalized consonants.^[7]

Consonants

Consonants occur plain and labialized.

Kaytetye	
Native to	Australia
Region	central Northern Territory
Ethnicity	Kaytetye people
Native speakers	120 ^[1] (2016 census) ^[2]
Language family	<div>Pama–Nyungan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Arandic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kaytetye</div>
Signed forms	Akitiri Sign Language
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	gbb
Glottolog	kayt1238 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kayt1238) ^[3]
AIATSIS ^[4]	C13 (https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/C13)

Grammar

Kin terms are obligatorily possessed, though with grammatically singular pronouns. There's a dyadic suffix as well.^[7]

Kaytetye kin inflections

	Elder brother	Mother
1	<i>alkere-ye</i> my/our brother	<i>arrwengke</i> my/our mother
2	<i>ngk-alkere</i> your brother	<i>ngk-arrwengke</i> your mother
3	<i>kw-alkere</i> his/her/their brother	<i>kw-arrwengke</i> his/her/their mother
dyadic	<i>alkere-nhenge</i> elder and younger brother	<i>arrwengke-nhenge</i> mother and child

Dual and plural pronouns distinguish clusivity as well as moiety (or 'section') and generation. That is, for a male speaker, different pronouns are used for *I and my sibling*, *grandparent*, *grandchild* (even generation, same moiety), *I and my father*, *I and my brother's child* (odd generation, same moiety), and *I and my mother*, *spouse*, *sister's child* (opposite moiety). This results in twelve pronouns for 'we':^[7]

Kaytetye pronouns for 'we'

Number & person	Even generation (same moiety)	Odd generation (same moiety)	Opposite moiety
Dual inclusive	<i>ayleme</i>	<i>aylake</i>	<i>aylanthe</i>
Dual exclusive	<i>aylene</i>	<i>aylenake</i>	<i>aylenanthe</i>
Plural inclusive	<i>aynangke</i>	<i>aynake</i>	<i>aynanthe</i>
Plural exclusive	<i>aynenangke</i>	<i>aynenake</i>	<i>aynenanthe</i>

That is, root *ay-*, dual suffix *-la* or plural *-na*, exclusive infix *<en>*, an irregular nasal for even generation, and a suffix for same moiety *-ke* or opposite moiety *-nthe*.

Verbs include incorporated former verbs of motion that indicate direction and relative timing of someone, usually the subject of the verb. There are differences depending on whether the verb is transitive or intransitive.^[7]

Kaytetye 'associated motion' stems

Time	<i>angke</i> 'talk'	Gloss	<i>kwathe</i> 'drink'	Gloss
Prior motion (go/come and X)	<i>angke-ye-ne-</i>	talk after going	<i>kwathe-ye-ne-</i>	drink after going
	<i>angke-ye-tnye-</i>	talk after coming	<i>kwathe-ye-tnye-</i>	drink after coming
	<i>angke-ya-lpe-</i>	talk after returning	<i>kwathe-ya-lpe-</i>	drink after returning
	<i>angke-ya-yte-</i>	talk after someone arrives	<i>kwathe-ya-yte-</i>	drink after someone arrives
Subsequent motion (X and go/come)	<i>angke-rra-yte-</i>	talk before leaving	<i>kwathe-la-yte-</i>	drink before leaving
	<i>angke-rra-lpe-</i>	talk before returning	<i>kwathe-la-lpe-</i>	drink before returning
Concurrent motion (X while going/coming)	<i>angke-yerna-lpe-</i>	talk while coming	<i>kwathe-yerna-lpe-</i>	drink while coming
	<i>angke-rra-pe-</i>	talk while going along	<i>kwathe-rra-pe-yne-</i>	drink while going along
	<i>angke-rra-ngke-rre-nye-</i>	talk continuously while going along	<i>kwathe-la-the-la-rre-</i>	drink continuously while going along
	<i>angke-lpa-ngke-</i>	talk once when on the way	<i>kwathe-lpa-the-</i>	drink once when on the way
Prior and subsequent	<i>angke-nya-yne-</i>	go and talk and come back	<i>kwathe-nya-yne-</i>	go and drink and come back

People

- Erlikilyika (Jim Kite) learnt to speak Kaytetye when working on the Overland Telegraph Line, and worked as an interpreter for anthropologists and explorers Spencer and Gillen.

References

1. "Kaytetye" (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/gbb>). *Ethnologue*. Retrieved 10 June 2019.
2. "Census 2016, Language spoken at home by Sex (SA2+)" (http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ABS_C16_T09_SA). *stat.data.abs.gov.au*. ABS. Retrieved 30 October 2017.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Kaytetye" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kayt1238>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. C13 (<https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/C13>) Kaytetye at the Australian Indigenous Languages Database, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
5. <https://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/gbb>
6. Kendon, A. (1988) *Sign Languages of Aboriginal Australia: Cultural, Semiotic and Communicative Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 60
7. Koch, 2006. "Kaytetye". In the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed.

Further reading

- Breen, Gavan (2001). "Chapter 4: The wonders of Arandic phonology". In Simpson, Jane; Nash, David; Laughren, Mary; Austin, Peter; Alpher, Barry (eds.). *Forty years on: Ken Hale and Australian languages* (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/43456489_Forty_Years_On_Ken_Hale_and_Australian_Languages) (pdf). Pacific Linguistics 512. ANU. Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. (Pacific Linguistics). pp. 45–69. ISBN 085883524X. (pp.59-62 are specifically on Kaytetye)
- Materials on Kaytetye are included in the open access Arthur Capell collections (AC1 (<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC1>)) held by Paradisec.
- Koch, Harold (April 2018). "Chapter 10: The Development of Arandic Subsection Names in Time and Space". In McConvell, Patrick; Kelly, Piers; Lacrampe, Sébastien (eds.). *Skin, Kin and Clan* (<http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n4082/html/ch10.xhtml?referer=&page=17>). ANU. doi:10.22459/SKC.04.2018 (<https://doi.org/10.22459%2FSKC.04.2018>). ISBN 9781760461645. Has map and gives much info about Arrernte group and related languages.

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